

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8421

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3202

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE US SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN REPLY TO US DEMARCHE

REF: ROME 3114 AND 2982

1. SUMMARY. ITALIAN EMBASSY DAMASCUS HAS REPORTED DELIVERY OF US DEMARCHE AND SYRIAN REACTION. WHILE ASSERTING THAT AUTHORITIES HAVE TAKEN MEASURES TO PREVENT REPRISALS AGAINST US CITIZENS, SYRIAN OFFICIALS ACCUSE US OF INDIRECT COMPLICITY IN ISRAELI RAID ON BEIRUT. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 19, ITALIAN CHARGE BIOLATO AND USINTERESTS OFFICER CARDILLI MADE PARALLEL APPROACHES TO DEPFONMIN ISMAIL AND DIRECTOR FOR AMERICAN AFFAIRS SHOULFI TO CONVEY DEMARCHE REQUESTED BY EMBASSY (ROME 2982). BIOLATO READ TEXT OF SISCO STATEMENT TO ISMAIL WHILE CARDILLI DELIVERED TO SHOULFI. FONOFF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR US AFFAIRS READ US CABLE FROM ITALIAN EMBASSY BEIRUT RECEIVED LATE APRIL 20 REPORTING SYRIAN REACTION TO US DEMARCHE.

3. ISMAIL STARTED OFF BY SAYING THAT ONE MUST UNDERSTAND THE INDIGNATION OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE TO THE ISRAELI RAID AND AT THE SAME TIME RECOGNIZE THAT THE SYRIAN REACTION HAS NOT
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REACHED THE LEVEL DEMONSTRATED IN SOME OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. HE POINTED OUT THAT SYRIAN MEDIA HAD NOT RPT NOT CARRIED ANY INCITEMENT TO REPRISALS AGAINST US CITIZENS OR DIPLOMATS NOR ANY STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT PUBLISHED OR BROADCAST ELSEWHERE. HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT PALESTINIANS SHOULD CONCENTRATE THEIR ATTACK ON THE ISRAELIS BUT NOT RPT NOT ON THE AMERICANS AS THIS WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. HOWEVER, ISMAIL ADDED THAT HE HELD US RESPONSIBLE ON TWO COUNTS: A) THE ISRAELI RAID WAS CARRIED OUT WITH SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM CIA, INVOLVING AT A MINIMUM AN INTELLIGENCE INPUT; B) THE RAID WAS FACILITATED BY CONTINUOUS US MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AND TEL AVIV'S CONVICTION THAT ITS ACTIONS WOULD GO UNPUNISHED IN THE UN. ISMAIL CONCLUDED BY CITING APRIL 16 SPEECH OF PRESIDENT ASSAD IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE ISRAELI ATTACK IN BEIRUT AND THE UN DEBATE CLEARLY ILLUMINATE USG POSITION AS A STRONG ENEMY OF THE ARAB NATIONS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY EVIDENT IN THE UN WHICH SHOWS THAT THE US IS CO-RESPONSIBLE, EVEN IF INDIRECTLY, FOR INCREASED TENSION IN THE AREA.

4. SHOEFI, AFTER TAKING NOTE OF CARDILLI'S REMARKS, ASSERTED THAT THE SYRIAN PRESS HAD BEEN LIMITED TO STATEMENTS WHICH ACCUSED THE US OF COOPERATION WITH THE ISRAELI COMMANDOS. REGARDING ANIT- US EDITORIALS IN SYRIAN PRESS, SHOEFI POINTED OUT THAT IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THE US ATTITUDE IN THE UN, WHICH UNLIKE THE BRITISH DID NOT CONDEMN ISRAEL, PROVES THAT THE US IMPLICITLY APPROVED THE BEIRUT RAID AND SHARES RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. SHOEFI SAID THAT IT IS IN THE SYRIAN INTEREST TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE US, BUT AFTER WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED RECENTLY, THIS ATTITUDE WILL HAVE TO BE RE- EXAMINED. SHOEFI ADDED THAT HE PERSONALLY DID NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE THAT US WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ISRAELI RAID BUT HE COULD UNDERSTAND PALESTINIAN BROADCASTS AS AN EMOTIONAL REACTION TO IT. HOWEVER, HE BLAMED THE US INDIRECTLY BECAUSE WASHINGTON FAILED TO CONDEMN THE ISRAELIS. CONCLUDING, HE NOTED THAT SYRIAN AUTHORITIES HAD INTERVENED TO CONTROL INCIPENT DEMONSTRATIONS OF LOCAL PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS.

5. CABLE CONCLUDED WITH ITALIAN EMBASSY COMMENTS WHICH NOTE:
 A) SARG STRESSED ABSENCE OF INCITEMENT AGAINST US CITIZENS.
 B) SARG ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT MEDIA HAD REPORTED PALESTINIAN THESIS OF DIRECT US COMPLICITY IN BEIRUT RAID ALTHOUGH THIS
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THESIS NOT RPT NOT SHARED BY SYRIANS, AT LEAST OFFICIALLY.

C) SYRIANS HAD MADE EFFORT TO CONTROL DEMONSTRATIONS.

D) SARG CONDEMNED US FOR PROVIDING UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT TO ISRAEL AND DENOUNCED INCREASING ANTI- ARAB ATTITUDE OF WASHINGTON.

6. FINALLY, ITALIAN EMBASSY REPORT NOTES THAT, FOLLOWING ASSAD' S SPEECH OF APRIL 16, ANTI- US PRESS CAMPAIGN CONTINUING BUT WITHIN LIMITS INDICATED PREVIOUSLY. AS EXAMPLE, REPORT CITES SAURA EDITORIAL OF APRIL 18 WHICH STRESSES THE NECESSITY OF FOLLOWING COURSE OF ACTION: CONSTITUTION OF SOLID INTERNAL FRONT; DRAWING TOGETHER OF ARAB MILITARY CAPABILITIES; REACT-IVATION OF RESISTANCE FORCES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND EXTIRPATION OF REACTIONARY ELEMENTS (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL) ON WHICH USG LEANS FOR SUPPORT OF ITS POLICY. BEAUDRY

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